

How to read and write Hangeul 한글
(Korean phonetic script)

조선 세종대왕
Joseon Sejong
Daewang
朝鮮 世宗大王

Sejong the Great,
1397-1450,
King of Joseon
reigned 1418-1450



from

위키백과
Uikhibekkoa = Wikipedia

Historic dynasties

신라 Silla 新羅 c. 0-800

고려 Goryeo (or Koryo) 高麗 918-1392 -> English word Korea

조선 Joseon or Chosun 朝鮮 1392-1910 (and modern North Korea)

김일성 GIM Il-seong (Kim Il Song, the Great leader)

김종일 GIM Jong-il (Kim Jong Il, the Dear leader)

한글 Hangeul (Korean phonetic script)

한국 Hanguk (South Korea) 韓國

Korea (since c. 1900, esp South Korea)

대한민국 Taehanminguk, independent Korea from 1890,
adopted as the name of South Korea

Half the alphabet

You can learn the majority of the consonants as the isolated initials

가 = ka, 나 = na, 다 = ta, 라 = ra, 마 = ma, 바 = pa, 사 = sa.

The ㅏ on the right is vowel a. The vowels have the following pictorial interpretations, used as mnemonics:

hook ㄱ k depicts the back of the tongue rising up to the soft palate to form the sound k or g

curve ㄷ is the tip of the tongue rising to the hard palate to form the sound t or d

squiggle ㄹ is the tongue snaking around to make the liquid sounds l or r

closed box ㅁ is the pouting lips to make m

open box ㅂ is the lips bursting open to make p or b

fork ㅅ is the tongue between the teeth forming sibilant s.

Xox syntax for syllables

In analysing Asian languages, the phonetic unit is the syllable, not the individual letter or phoneme. By definition a syllable is an initial consonant (or nothing), a medial vowel and a final consonant (possibly compound, possibly nothing). This applies in the first instance to Chinese, where each syllable is a character, usually with a unit of meaning (hence the designation "monosyllabic"), but also to Korean and Japanese. For example,

한글 Hangeul (Korean phonetic script) is

한 Han initial ㅎ h + medial ㅏ a + final ㄴ n

글 keul initial ㄱ k or g + medial ㅡ eu + final ㄹ r or l.

Voice and unvoiced

In phonetics, voiced means that the vocal chords vibrate; it is one of the distinctions between k and g, t and d, p and b, etc. Korean does not distinguish the unvoiced and voiced consonants

- ㄱ k or g,
- ㄷ t or d,
- ㅂ p or b,
- ㅈ ch or j.

How the hangeul element (letter or grapheme) is pronounced depends on its position in the word or in the sentence. Wedged between two vowels (or between a final and a vowel, or some other cases internal to a word) ㄱ, ㄷ, ㅂ, ㅈ are voiced as g, d, b, j. For example, in 한글 Hangeul, the initial k of the second syllable is wedged between n and a vowel, so is voiced to g.

You should remember the consonants as 가나다라마바사 ka-na-da-ra-ma-ba-sa. This already gives you half the alphabet, in alphabetical order, and one of the important phonetic transformation rules.

The liquid sounds r = l are not distinguished: at the end of a syllable (isolated from the following syllable), it is pronounced l; at the start of a syllable (rather rare in modern Korean), it is pronounced r.

aspirated and unaspirated
vowels
liaisons

서울 Seo-ul (Seoul) 首爾
평양 P'yeong-yang (Pyongyang) 平壤
수학 suhak (Mathematics) 數學
서강 대학교 Seogang Daehakkyo (Sogang University) 西江大學校
수학과 suhakkua (Math department) 數學科
N.B. kg or kk = ㄱ reinforced kk, not voiced g
고등 과학원 Institute for Advanced Studies (KIAS) 韓國高等科學院

대우 Daewu (Daewoo)
현대 Hyeondae (Hyundai) 現代
삼성 Samseong (Samsung) 三星

Exercise. These are all words you know from the phonetic values.

라디오
비디오
텔레비전
택시
토쿄
런던
코리아
베이징

Consonants

k or g	ㄱ
n	ㄴ
t or d	ㄷ
r or l	ㄹ
m	ㅁ
p or b	ㅂ
s	ㅅ

Think: ka-na-da-ra-ma-ba-sa 가나다라마바사 (that's half the alphabet, and the dictionary order!)

nothing	ㅇ	as initial	-ng as final
ch or j	ㅈ		
ch'	ㅊ	aspirated version of	ch ㅈ
k'	ㅋ	aspirated version of	k ㄱ
t'	ㅌ	aspirated version of	t ㄷ
p'	ㅍ	aspirated version of	p ㅂ
h'	ㅎ	aspirated version of	nothing ㅇ

reinforced versions

kk	ㄲ
tt	ㄸ
pp	ㅃ
ss	ㅆ
jj	ㅉ

Vowels

Simple vowels:

아	a
오	o
우	woo
어	eo
ㅡ	eu
ㅣ	yi

moistened versions:

야	ya
요	yo
유	yu
여	yeo

The others are complicated, but thought of as "combined vowels" or diphthongs:

애	ae
얘	yae
에	e
예	ye
와	wa
왜	wae
외	oi
워	weo
웨	we
위	wi
의	yi

